



FEMA

Acquisition Projects Help Flood-Prone Community Better Off

Cleveland, IL - It's just a little winding river in northwestern Illinois, but the Rock River drains a large watershed that includes the Upper Rock, the Pecatonica River in Wisconsin and even as far north as Lake Winnebago. When heavy rain or snow melt occurs in that watershed, the Rock River can rise quickly. That's why residents of this small village of 300 near the mouth of the Rock River have endured flooding year after year.

But the recurring devastation of flooding was considerably lessened during the last two flood events: following an ice jam on the river in February of 2001 and a tremendous amount of rainfall in June of 2002. An acquisition program conducted under FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program removed a total of 31 structures from the floodplain that had received repeated damage over the years, including the home of Nancy Hoskins. Her house had filled with three feet of water, then four and a half feet, then five and half feet in three consecutive floods before she sold her home through the acquisition program in 2001.

After the Great Midwestern Flood of 1993, members of the community began discussing the possibility of an acquisition project with the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA). A major flood in 1997 created a strong incentive for the program and by February 1998, properties were being purchased. IEMA and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources/Office of Water Resources (IDNR/OWR) coordinated the voluntary buyout of 13 homes in Phase I and 18 homes to date in Phase II. An HMGP grant provided \$989,742 for the projects, along with a Floodplain Mitigation Assistance grant of \$472,920. The IDNR contributed the 25% matching funds, which totaled \$487,554.

"The community of Cleveland focused on helping those in harm's way to have an alternative to flooding, especially those who were elderly or ill in Phase I of the project," said Bob Sherman, IEMA Mitigation Planner. He added that Bob Collis, Cleveland's point of contact for the acquisition program, "worked hard to make sure people got out that wanted to."

For Collis, explaining the components of the buyout program to residents was a priority when initiating the program. Collis and local officials met with residents prior to the public meeting just to explain how everything worked.

"Then those people who were participating in Phase I attended the public meeting and representatives from IEMA, IDNR and FEMA helped explain the whole program to them," said Collis.

Although a buyout program can be a lengthy and complex process, Hoskins said that when the river rose in June 2002 she was glad she had participated: "This year there would have been at least five and a half feet in my house if it had still been there."

Community leaders and IEMA hope to bring that same sense of security to those approximately 25 homeowners who were affected by floodwaters in 2002. Initiatives are currently being taken to continue successfully mitigating in the Rock River floodplain with a Phase III buyout.



Henry County,
Illinois



Quick Facts

Sector:

Private

Cost:

Amount Not Available

Primary Activity/Project:

Acquisition/Buyouts

Primary Funding:

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)